

View from the Chair

After two years in the Chair my term of office will sadly come to an end this month. I have had a really enjoyable time, albeit a very busy one trying to meet this commitment in my own time. There have been many memorable occasions and I have visited all four corners of England on Forum business during this period. But, I think my most memorable visit was the most recent as I was fortunate enough to be asked to represent the Forum at the EAHTR symposium held in Dubrovnik last month.

I am especially pleased that St Edmundsbury Borough Council is hosting this year's Annual Conference in my home town and I look forward to meeting the many friends and acquaintances that I have made over the last few years. We have a good programme of speakers and many examples of the problems that historic towns are trying to overcome, as well as examples of good practice. It will give me particular pleasure to show off the Historic Core Zone project, something I have been involved in with the Forum for nearly ten years. Preparing for the Conference I found the brochure advertising the Annual Conference held in Bury St Edmunds in 1996. It struck me that many of the issues addressed at that Conference remain today - eg the value of conservation in town centre management; historic properties in commercial use, and the economic aspects of conserving buildings.

For those delegates who came to Bury St Edmunds last time, this year's Conference will provide an opportunity to see the results of some long term projects. The Historic Core Zones project is now complete, the restoration of the homes built into the Abbey West Front is almost complete and it is quite possible that the Cattle Market retail led redevelopment will finally be under way after many years and a number of different proposals.

Looking ahead, the Forum will need to face some major issues over the next few years, both as a organisation and the projects it is involved with. The new Business Plan sets out an ambitious programme of work that I am sure will add value to the membership, as well as creating an organisation that will become more sustainable and sound.

So, as I go and dust off my bike, I must thank the members of the Executive, Chris Winter and Dawn, Helen and Sam at the office for all



Left: The Chairman gets on his bike and rides off into the sunset

Tom Tooe

Feature Town : Penzance



The Penzance Townscape Heritage Initiative is a major heritage-led regeneration initiative which aims to encourage sustainable investment by regenerating the physical environment and reinforcing the quality of the town's heritage. The specific objectives and projects can be seen in detail on www.penwith.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=16352

The last phase of the extensive THI public realm works in Market Jew Street begins this month, with Cornish granite being laid on the last few sections of the footway and refurbishment of the historic cast iron railings and street lighting to The Terrace. The first grant aid applications have been received and the THI aims to continue the regeneration of Penzance by investing in the repair, refurbishment and/or reuse of the town's fascinating and varied stock of historic buildings.

Penwith District Council is proud of the history of Penzance, which is an ancient settlement with an attractive port and town overlooking Mounts Bay, with varied fortunes from plunder by the Spanish to those generated by all the trades necessary to support shipping and fishing, with its own coinage hall, custom house and collector of taxes.

It shared Cornwall's extraordinary mining engineering and trading expansion, but the railway stimulated prosperity from tourism and fresh produce, which continue to provide a vibrant local economy.

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Remmers are undoubtedly the world leaders in stone and masonry restoration. This includes mixed facades constructed from combinations of stone, timber, masonry, concrete and rendering. These are particularly difficult to refurbish and protect successfully whilst maintaining the integrity of the original materials. The reasons are their different structural, thermal movement, corrosion, modes of deterioration and permeability properties.

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EHTF Annual Conference and AGM

18 - 20 October 2006
Bury St Edmunds

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The yellow lines
dilemma in Ludlow

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News



ENGLISH HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

No more signs and lines!

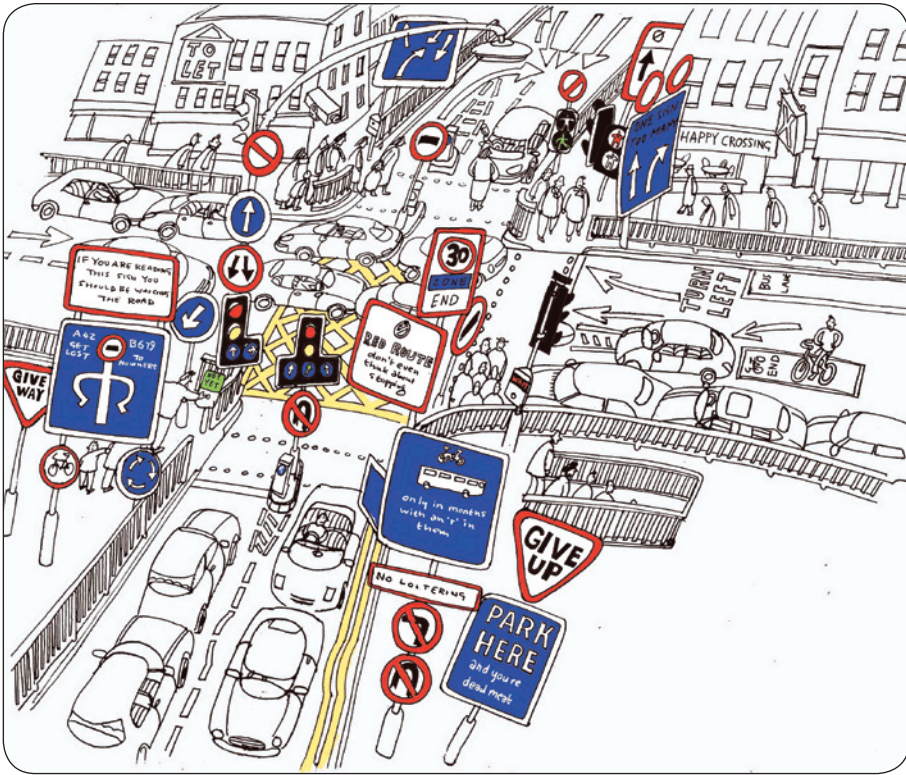


Illustration: Paul Boston and Ben Hamilton-Baillie, Director of Hamilton-Baillie Associates

The Forum has been campaigning since the early 1990's for fewer signs and lines and less street clutter.

Over the years other organisations may have had a higher profile - for example English Heritage with 'Streets for All' - but EHTF has consistently published guidance which points to a better way: for example the Historic Core Zones Report (1999) and Review (2003) and Focus on the Public Realm (2003).

Ben Hamilton-Baillie has worked with EHTF and continues to demonstrate the aesthetic and safety advantages of fewer signs, through the European 'Shared Space' programme. Bradford on Avon is the most recent Forum Member to ask for Ben's advice, which he gave at a meeting in the beautiful Wiltshire town on 8 September. He will also be the keynote speaker at a 'Transport Day' organised by the the West Suffolk Green Business Forum in Bury St Edmunds on 29 November.

CPRE and the RAC are now calling for less clutter on country roads, which although outside of the remit of EHTF, has significant impact on the approach to many historic towns, set as they are in rural contexts.

The fairly experimental traffic management schemes put in place in Halifax, Lincoln, Shrewsbury and Bury St Edmunds for the Historic Core Zones project were in consultation with, and with the approval of, the then Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and may have involved "imaginative interpretation of the regulations" but have not yet resulted in any catastrophes!

The pressure is mounting to re-think the public spaces that have been obscured by a plethora of information and instructions, in an increasing risk-averse society. EHTF would like to offer Members the opportunity to share examples of best practice in order to encourage colleagues who may have difficulties convincing others that less is more!

The Annual Conference will continue to develop this theme and work in 2007 will include scrutiny of the new Transport Innovation Fund Initiative.

Please contact Chris Winter, EHTF Director, if you would like your experiences shared through the website or the newsletter.

EHTF is supported by

New Members

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EHTF Partners
Cityscape 2007

27 February - 1 March

Earls Court 2 is the venue for this regular event which brings together all sectors of the built environment and, after some involvement over recent years, 2007 will see a major input from the Forum.

The EHTF 'Pavilion' on the main exhibition floor will include partners Donaldsons, RPS Planning, Transport & Environment and Land Securities Group PLC, with Gillespies LLP and Colin Buchanan taking nearby stands.

The extensive conference programme will include speakers who will represent the point of view of the Forum on a diverse range of subjects. In addition, a ½ day seminar will be run by EHTF as part of the three day programme.

During the course of the event, celebrations for the Forum's 20th anniversary will begin with an evening reception.

Identity, Diversity and Tourism

"Tourism is just one of the many forces for change affecting historic towns and should not be treated as a scapegoat". This was the message given by Ian Poole, EHTF Chair, at the 2006 EAHTR Symposium in Dubrovnik at the end of September. Ian presented a paper on 'The Importance of Identity and Diversity: Tourism in Context'.

Ian stressed the significance of identity and diversity and drew attention to the pressures for change, many of which are driven by market forces. The Forum has long recognised that tourism is one, but only one, driver of change and has published best practice guidance to encourage more sustainable tourism.

'Focus on Tourism' is the latest guidance, published in February 2006. The Symposium heard how it proposes actions to recognise the uniqueness of a place, steps to enhance this and opportunities for reinforcing identity through improvements to the environment.

Quoting from 'Power of Place' - English Heritage 2000, Ian urged the Symposium "to understand better the character of places and the value and significance people ascribe to them".

Brian Human,
Executive Committee Member &
Head of Policy and Projects
Cambridge City Council



Website continues to expand

Having launched a new website at the 2006 Annual Conference, work has continued to improve the facility and to provide a networking resource for Members and useful port of call for a range of information relating to the management of historic towns.

The latest facility to be added is a selection of EHTF publications for free download.

Whilst this selection does not include the most recent publications, which continue to provide a necessary part of the Forum's income stream, they contain information and guidance which is still very relevant and in some cases, although innovative at the time of publication, has become acknowledged best practice.

Members can also access the Membership Directory and therefore network freely with colleagues, exchanging problems and solutions.

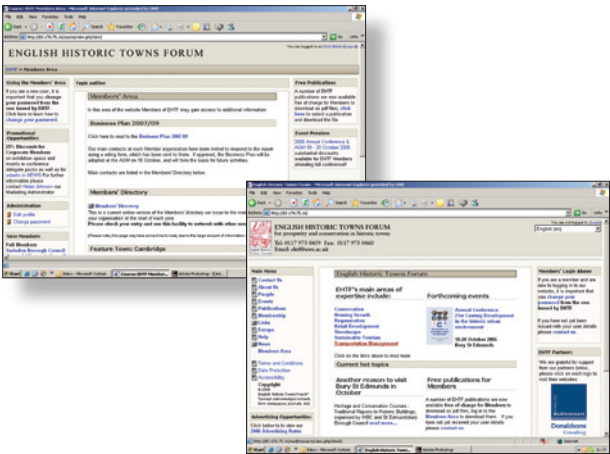
A paper version of the Directory will no longer be published each year, saving precious resources and offering instead a constantly up dated version, which does not get lost among the other paper work on the shelves!

All Members will be issued with a user name and password, which they will be invited to personalise on the first visit to the site.

In future, this medium for the dissemination of good practice will be considered alongside the tried and tested paper publications, and either or both will be used as appropriate.

Please send comments and contributions to ehtf@uwe.ac.uk or use 'Contact Us' on the website - www.ehtf.org.uk .

Please note: all information listed on the website is also available in print from the EHTF office.



The Forum celebrates its 20th Anniversary in 2007

Formed in 1987 by a group of planners in a small number of historic towns, EHTF has grown in size, membership and influence. It has had some notable successes and continues to campaign to keep historic towns special whilst providing vibrant, viable places for 21st century residents and visitors.

Events to celebrate this anniversary are currently being planned and will start at Cityscape 2007 at Earl's Court (28 February - 1 March) with further events announced in the New Year.

As in the historic towns it represents, change is also inevitable in the organisation and a major consultation with Members was carried out during late 2005 / early 2006. As a result of this some fairly significant changes have been proposed and will be discussed and taken forward at the AGM on October 18.

The Business Plan 2007 - 09 will shape the future of the organisation and its work over the coming few years. Members have been invited to comment on this, which can be viewed in the Members' Area of the website.

Walled Towns Friendship Circle 16th Annual Symposium - Verona Italy



The WTFC held its 16th annual symposium based in Verona, Italy last month and included sessions in the historic towns of Cittadella, Mantua and Venice. There were a wide range of lectures on offer, dealing with both the economic significance of walled cities and the technical issues surrounding the maintenance, restoration and conservation of some magnificent fortifications, as well as more modern buildings.

During the sessions the Circle was delighted to host a video link between youngsters in Verona with their counterparts in Valletta, Malta and Piran, Slovenia, to talk about the joint project they are all working on to produce a

book about the experiences of youngsters "living in the shadow of the walls".

WTFC Members were also hugely impressed with the ambience of Verona itself, Mantua and - perhaps specially so - Cittadella with its extraordinary and virtually complete circuit of massive walls - recently the subject of a huge investment and showing how contemporary interventions to give access with a lift and museum facilities can be wonderfully integrated when the quality of design is exceptional. The new staircase in the breach in the City Wall there was of particular interest to many. No doubt, we will reflect on the high standard of workmanship and design as well as the impressive sums of money raised locally and nationally to protect and enhance this remarkable region's cultural heritage.

By Chris Lines/Howard Dickenson
Chester City Council

The yellow lines dilemma in Ludlow

An example of the challenges facing many Forum Members

Shropshire County Council is introducing decriminalised parking enforcement (DPE) very soon and it is a legal requirement for all parking restrictions, signs and markings to be 100% correct on the ground before they can be enforced.

In Ludlow, at the same time, a Pay and Display scheme will be introduced, generating an income which will enable the start up of a new full time Park and Ride service this October, whilst also cutting some bus fares. In addition, there is a residents' parking permit scheme covering the whole town, so local people are not disadvantaged by the charges.

A decision was made to re-mark where necessary existing double yellow lines to conservation area standards and mark out bays in line with current regulations. This would require fewer upright signs (since 'no waiting at any time' plates are no longer mandatory with double yellow lines) and would be more easily enforceable.

This is consistent with what was done after the enhancement scheme was completed and the yellow lines have



Quality Square, Ludlow

been quite neatly executed. There are no lines in a couple of the most highly sensitive areas, such as Quality Square, but elsewhere the choice is stark: lines, signs or cars. Experience tells us that people will park in even the narrowest of streets if they get the chance!

There will be a review of the signing situation once the scheme has settled down and improvements or alterations to reduce visual impact will be considered then. This review (which it has been suggested may involve EHTF) will be taken very seriously, in line with the long term approach to historic Ludlow.

Demands for development in historic towns

Pressures for housing provision are most keenly felt by smaller towns, often with a discrete footprint and distinctive character. This applies to many of the Forum's Members and two conferences, held in Ely in December 2004 and in Cirencester last July, have already gone some way to bringing good practice guidance to a wide audience.

With support from East Cambridgeshire District Council and LDA Design the process of achieving housing growth demonstrated by the Ely case study has been brought together in a publication, 'Focus on Housing Growth' which will be launched at this year's Annual Conference in Bury St Edmunds in October.

Work continues around the issue of achieving high quality urban design for housing growth. Following workshops held at the Cirencester conference, a small task group is working with EHTF Corporate Members Pegasus Planning to collect and collate best practice into a succinct guide which will be published in the New Year.

As the nation's favourite leisure pastime, the retail 'offer' is also under constant scrutiny. Many towns are faced with the need to redevelop shopping centres built 30 or 40 years ago and to provide contemporary facilities in sensitive historic contexts.

The Annual Conference in Bury St Edmunds will bring together experts on all aspects of redevelopment and explore the town as a case study - with its recently approved plans for the controversial Cattle Market scheme. It will also provide an opportunity to hear outcomes from recently completed schemes in Canterbury, Exeter and Cambridge and to explore the real implications for historic towns of some commonly used phrases - such as 'sustainable communities' and 'clone towns'.



High Density Housing, Ely

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